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## NIETZSCHE AND WAGNER: THEIR INFLUENCE ON

### NATIONAL SOCIALISM

In 1943 during the blackest days of World War II the United States Department of State issued a booklet on National Socialism-- a summary of our enemy's ideology, its background, and its present application. In the booklet's analysis of Nazism's basic principles appeared the following statements:

The ideological concepts on which the Nazi movement and the Third Reich are based have well-defined antecedents in certain aspects of German political thought of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The theses of these nineteenth century doctrinaires were amalgamated and expanded by the Nazis for their own purposes....The contribution of the Nazis has not been to create a new political ideology but rather to crystallize the political aspirations of these doctrinaires and to achieve them by unscrupulous and ruthless methods.

Among the theorists of the nineteenth century accused of being forerunners of Nazism were Richard Wagner and Friedrich Nietzsche. The writers of the booklet held Wagner to blame because of his racism and anti-Semitism. Nietzsche was believed guilty because his writings gave impetus to German imperialism, "glorified the blond Teuton beast and advocated the use of utter ruthlessness by Germans in achieving their goals."<sup>1</sup>

It is the purpose of this study to attempt to determine whether these accusations, typical of the charges made against the two men, are justified, or if they represent false conclusions colored by war.

Other writers on this subject have pointed to what they accept as positive connecting links between Nietzsche and Wagner, and the Nazis. Louis Snyder believes that there was a terrific impact of Nietzsche's doctrine of the Superman on the youth of Germany in the latter part of the nineteenth century. He cites as evidence the fact that students went to dull lectures with a copy of Thus Spake



Zarathustra (the book in which Nietzsche introduces his Superman) to read in order to keep awake. Snyder further asserts that Nietzsche's works were used to justify militarism, nationalistic teaching in German schools, and even nationalistic journalism. The Nietzschean philosophy did not reach the masses but it did find readers, according to Snyder, among the ruling caste of the German Empire. Those blood-and-iron men, Junkers and monarchists, thought they had found some of their own principles in Nietzsche's writings. In regard to this supposed early interest in Nietzsche, Louis Snyder wrote:

Here was a theory expressed in concrete form which had heretofore been of interest as a mere hypothesis. Nietzsche crystalized by means of philosophical speculation, melancholy but firm and crystal clear, the idea of force, and strength which appeared in the eighties as a predominant characteristic of German nationalism.<sup>2</sup>

Wagner's ideas were spread through Germany by a group of disciples known as the Wagner Circle, or the Bayreuth Circle after Wagner's death in 1883. Included in the group were the Master's widow, Cosima Wagner; his son, Siegfried Wagner; his son-in-law, Houston Stewart Chamberlain; Alfred Rosenberg; Dietrich Eckart; and later Hitler and Goebbels. Rosenberg became the official Nazi philosopher. Eckart, who brought Hitler into the group in 1923, taught his "discovery" Wagner's ideas on racial purity as they had been enlarged and expanded by Chamberlain.<sup>3</sup> The latter was an Englishman who was drawn to Germany by Wagner's music and ideas. His world famous book, The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century, maintains that the superior race, the Germans, will rule all mankind.<sup>4</sup>

It is known that Hitler played Wagnerian records on a portable phonograph the thirteen months he was in prison serving a sentence of treason. During this time he dictated Mein Kampf, the Nazi Bible, to Rudolph Hess. Hitler continued his friendship with the Wagner family



which had begun with his introduction into the Bayreuth Circle. He even found time to attend the Bayreuth Festival of Wagnerian Music with Winifred Wagner, widow of Siegfried, and Verena Wagner during the crisis months of July and August 1939. Winifred, whom Hitler was at one time expected to marry, has been known as "keeper of the Wagnerian tradition" and "dictator of the Bayreuth Festival." Hitler also found pleasure in playing with the blond grandchildren of Wagner, who are said to have treated him, much to his delight as an old uncle.<sup>5</sup>

In the face of this evidence of concrete links between Wagner and Hitler, and of Nietzschean influence on the German nationalists who paved the way for the victory of the National Socialist Party in twentieth century Germany, it is still possible to doubt the direct influence of these two men of the late nineteenth century on Nazism as we saw it in World War II. Assertions that Nietzsche's thought produced an immediate effect on those Germans with totalitarian leanings have doubtful validity, since at all times it is difficult to prove the effect of ideas on a people. No agency can accurately record influence. Newspapers do try to keep in touch with what their readers are thinking, but no editor can be sure at any time that he knows the real views of his readers. Even personal accounts are not suited for the purpose of determining the climate of thought at a given time, for no one reference could be accepted as a cross section of opinion. As to the strong relationship between Wagner and Hitler, these facts may prove that Hitler used Wagner's thought only as a rationalization for his actions. This argument might well be used in explaining the similarity of the bitter anti-Semitism of the two men. Therefore, no final conclusion can be attained as to the degree or type of influence Nietzsche or Wagner had on National Socialism.

Before endeavoring to analyse the thought of Nietzsche and Wagner

and its possible later influence, it is first necessary to examine the political background against which these two men wrote. Wagner reflected the growing German nationalism of the last half of the nineteenth century in his writings on racism and nordic superiority, while Nietzsche's chief works illustrate, through his emphasis on the primacy of one class, the beginnings of totalitarianism. Such political ideas were evident in Germany even in 1848, the year in which a wave of liberal revolutions swept Europe.

Continental liberals of 1848 generally were of the middle class. They wanted written constitutions, extended suffrage, and laissez-faire in business. They sanctioned a cultural type of nationalism, but were chiefly concerned with lessening the centralized control of the state.<sup>6</sup> On the surface, the revolution in Germany had this coating of characteristic liberal creeds. The liberals in the insurrection had been the Burschenschaft members of 1813, but the years had so mellowed their youthful revolutionary enthusiasm that they now believed that all change could be achieved by peaceful discussion. An uprising in Berlin in March of 1848 made possible a brief interlude of German liberalism, before the Prussian army and King Frederick William IV regained control the following year. In Germany as a whole, the liberal leaders assembled at Frankfort to pursue their program of German union by consent. Their solution to social problems, however, was one beneficial only to the bourgeoisie. This group like the other European liberals, failed to include the masses in their plans for constitutional democracy, an omission which figured in the collapse of all 1848 revolutions. The proletariat refused to support a revolt which would not result in their betterment. Moreover, German liberalism turned away from the continental creed by supporting Prussian and Austrian armies against Czechs,

Poles, and Danes. Yet Liberals were surprised when Prussian and Austrian weapons turned against them as liberal constitutionalists. Unwittingly, they had sacrificed their beliefs to the national cause.

This national egoism was to be translated later into Bismarck's "blood and iron" policy. The nationalistic stand of the German liberals alienated them from their former brothers in western Europe. And Prussia Liberals in Frankfurt during 1848 sympathized with the king, from nationalistic motives, in his fight against the Prussian parliament.<sup>7</sup> The final defeat of German liberalism occurred in 1866, following the Prussian victory over Austria which had made Bismarck, the state's chancellor, a hero. The liberals held a grudge against the popular statesman because he had financed Prussia's army without constitutional sanction. However, their anger was not so intense that it could not be erased by a peace offering in the form of a bill introduced by Bismarck to legalize the finances. In interpreting the effect of this, Robert Binkley observed:

The liberals as a class and liberalism as an idea sold out to Bismarck. Though the Prussian diet and the later Reichstag filled a large place in the political machine, the political life of Germany never became what the hopes of the liberals of the New Era would have made it.<sup>8</sup>

German liberals had completed their transformation to German nationalists, and were ready to adhere to policies of growing authoritarianism in their government.

Nietzsche's writings of the "Will to Power", "Transvaluation of Values", and the "Superman", formed a sharp contrast to the Liberalism that was current in Europe during the first half of the century. Liberalism's adherents had taught that man must subdue his primitive instinct to conquer; all are equal. Nietzsche spoke against Socialism and Liberalism creeds which were in the ascendancy in his part of the



century. He thought it ridiculous to allow the weaker to rule over the masters. If the powerful men continued to give in to the masses, it would be impossible, according to his plan, for his Superman to arrive. Nietzsche's views were part of the growing authoritarianism in Europe.<sup>9</sup> Thomas Mann said of this:

...basically remote from politics and innocently spiritual, he functioned as an infinitely sensitive instrument of expression and registration, with his philosophies of power he presaged the dawning imperialism and as a quivering floatstick indicated the fascist era of the West in which we are living and shall continue to live for a long time to come despite the military victory over fascism.<sup>10</sup>

This temporary isolation of which Mann speaks caused Nietzsche himself to feel that he was premature, that his true influence would come at some future time. In his short work, The AntiChrist, he wrote: "It is only the day after tomorrow that belongs to me."<sup>11</sup> He said of Ecce Homo, which at one time he wanted only his sister to read:

There is nothing in it for Germans.....I mean to bury the manuscript and hide it; let it turn to mold, and we are all mold, it may have its resurrection. Perhaps then Germans will be worthier of the great present, which I mean to make them.<sup>12</sup>

In accord with this feeling of Nietzsche, William Salter recorded some speculations on Nietzsche's later importance and influence in his book, Nietzsche the Thinker, published in 1917. Since Salter wrote long before the advent of Nazism, his ideas border on clairvoyance. This writer believed that though Nietzsche had as yet had little real influence, it was still possible that his thought would be reconsidered at some future time. Salter prophesied mankind's ultimate struggle with Nietzsche's ideology. He did not mean to imply the coming mastery of the man's ideas but rather a conflict which would give strength to those who fight against him.<sup>13</sup>

Frederick Nietzsche led a simple life, his later years having been almost wholly given over to the formulation of his philosophy in the solitude of the Italian seashores and the south German alps. It is valuable to consider certain facts of his biography which have had a marked effect on his writings. Since Nietzsche's father was a minister of the Protestant German church, the boy was reared in an atmosphere of extreme piety. As many of his predecessors had been associated with the church, he believed at one time during his youth that he too would become a pastor. This early religious fervor contrasts sharply with Nietzsche's subsequent fierce attacks on established religion. It seems probable that he reacted to the excess of piety in his youth.

It is pertinent to examine another influence of the philosopher's youth, his awareness of a possible noble Polish ancestry. Though his sister has said that the family's Polish descent was a myth, Nietzsche clung throughout his life to the notion that he was not of the race of German shopkeepers but a Pole, the Parisian of Slavs. It is significant that the thinker became champion of autocracy and a severe critic of German nationalism.

Owing to his father's early death, Nietzsche's childhood was spent in a circle of women. His sister in later life became his companion and his nurse after he lost his health. It may well be that his antifeminism was, like his antichurch attitude, a revolt against the extremes of an early influence.

At the University of Bonn, Nietzsche distinguished himself as a brilliant, thorough scholar, especially interested in classic philology. During this period of his life he was introduced to Schopenhauer's philosophy of the Will. He became for a time a disciple of the great German pessimist; and though he later broke with his master, he never

escaped Schopenhauer's idea of Will as supreme to reason. At Bonn, Nietzsche also came under the influence of Richard Wagner. Their acquaintance ripened into a warm friendship after Nietzsche joined the faculty of the University of Basel as professor of classical philology in 1869. Such was Nietzsche's devotion to Wagner that he once offered to go through Germany soliciting assistance for the Bayreuth enterprise prior to its 1876 opening. Soon after, however, the thinker became disillusioned upon discovering that Wagner's purpose for art was not what Nietzsche had first thought it to be. Nietzsche, once the disciple of two great Germans, retired to formulate the most independent thought of the nineteenth century.<sup>14</sup>

In Will to Power, Nietzsche outlined the scope of his work with the words: "To have travelled over the whole circumference of the modern soul, and to have sat in all its corners—my ambition, my torment, and my happiness."<sup>15</sup> The vastness of the task he set may account for contradictions found on the surface of his writings, for if his thought is taken as a whole, the contradictions are small. Nietzsche had some personal aims in his study of this large topic. He hoped to find answers that would help him to live, even if others did not find value and advice in his philosophy. This fact probably accounts for his wariness in forcing his views upon his contemporaries. He asked his young readers to weigh his ideas before taking them as a guide; it was their responsibility to evaluate his thoughts even if it caused them to turn away from him. In this way, they would have found his works' true value.

During the period in which Nietzsche wrote his most important books (after 1876), he suffered almost continuous illness. He tells of one year in which he experienced two hundred sick days. This condition forced him to write down ideas at intervals, usually when he was not



walking or climbing.<sup>16</sup> Hence his writings often have a pithy, concise style. He perfected this literary manner, and even found profit in what necessity had forced on him. His short statements are often filled with thoughts that many writers would have consumed pages in telling. Nietzsche suffered a stroke of paralysis which affected his brain late in 1888. A number of physical causes led to his final mental collapse.<sup>17</sup> Some writers attribute the thinker's insanity almost entirely to his very intense intellectual work during years when his health was already bad. In reference to a letter written by Nietzsche to a friend in which he expressed the view that he might not be capable of pursuing his quest of thought to the final goal, Thomas Mann said:

That is a confession made very early, as early as 1876; it is the anticipation of his fate, of his breakdown; the prescience of a man who will be driven to take upon himself more cruel realizations than his heart will be able to stand and who will offer to the world the spectacle of a profoundly moving self-sacrifice.<sup>18</sup>

Nietzsche went through certain changes of thought in his life. These changes were not chosen by him, rather they became necessary as his way to truth forced him away from certain ideas. He did not wish his break with religion. The end of his friendship with Wagner was for him one of the most tragic events of his life. His quest forced him to turn again and again to new ways and ideas.<sup>19</sup> His writings have been divided into three general periods, each illustrating the changes his mind experienced. The first extends roughly from 1868, when he became professor of classical philology at the University of Basel, to the summer of 1876, the date of his break with Wagner. During these years he published The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music, and wrote and thought of art and music in relation to their contribution to a new culture. He was a friend and disciple of Wagner during this time. The second period of his writings, 1876 to 1881, was characterized by

uncertainty and doubt. In his disillusionment with Wagner he forsook his study of the art and music of the future. His chief books of this period, Human, All-too-Human, Daym of Day, and Joyful Science, with their lack of orderly thought, reflect Nietzsche's feelings. After 1881, Nietzsche began his constructive thinking. He was not depressed over the loss of his first ideals. His positive philosophy is recorded chiefly in the three important books of this period, Thus Spake Zarathustra, Beyond Good and Evil, and Will to Power.

The expression, "Superman," which has been the subject of active interest in both nineteenth and twentieth century Europe, appears chiefly in the poetic prose work, Thus Spake Zarathustra. There is no reference to it in Beyond Good and Evil, the book which followed, and it is mentioned only once in the next work, Genealogy of Morals.<sup>20</sup> The German word for Superman, Uebermensch, translates literally as "beyond man" or "over man." This more adequately describes the Nietzschean doctrine than "Superman". Darwin had given a picture of the evolution of man to his present mental and physical level. Nietzsche now wrote of the Superman who would rise above present man. It was time to attempt an organization of mankind, with the god-like Superman as the final goal. Learning and science were not to remain ends in themselves but rather to become tools for men possessed with the Superman vision. There must be some organization of mankind to accomplish this ideal.<sup>21</sup> In Beyond Good and Evil, the book in which the word "Superman" is not used, is this about the duty of the aristocracy of the present:

Its fundamental belief must be precisely that society is not allowed to exist for its own sake, but only as a foundation and scaffolding, by means of which a select class of beings may be able to elevate themselves to their higher duties, and in general to a higher existence.....<sup>22</sup>

"Will to Power," the often misinterpreted phrase of Nietzsche's, is a tool to use in reaching the Superman. Jacques Barzun said of this Will:

...it is the need of self-knowledge and self-assertion without which nothing great can be done. Only in fine natures does it bear fruit. The common yearning for overlordship, for satisfying the ego anyhow, is a sign of weakness that spells slavery either way. The Nietzschean ideal is simply the quenchless desire of man to be conscious, cultured, and free.<sup>23</sup>

Nietzsche in The AntiChrist explains his concept of Will to Power in somewhat stronger terms:

What is good?-All that increases the feeling power, will to power, power itself, in man.

What is bad?-All that proceeds from weakness.

What is happiness?-The feeling that power increases, that a resistance is overcome.

Not contentedness, but more power; not peace at any price, but warfare; not virtue, but capacity.<sup>24</sup>

This Will is important in that it minimizes the importance of Reason in progress. Nietzsche, then placed himself with those who reacted against the eighteenth century Age of Reason, and paved the way for future amorality by glorifying force and will. In any case Nietzsche did not want his works compared with those of Darwin. The Will to Power is not Darwin's struggle for existence or instinct of self preservation.<sup>25</sup> Nietzsche dismissed the idea of his being influenced by Darwin with the following observation:

As regards the celebrated 'struggle for life', it seems to me, in the meantime, to be more asserted than proved. It occurs, but only as an exception; it is rather a state of opulence, luxuriance, and even absurd prodigality, -where there is a struggle, it is a struggle for power. We must not confound Malthus with nature.<sup>26</sup>

Though Will to Power will be an instrument to be used in achieving Superman, such processes as self selection and mutual selection must also be controlled to assure the attainment of the goal. Nietzsche, who usually scorned woman as a baser animal, does recognize her responsibility as the mother of the Superman. Only the man and woman of the best physical



and mental type should marry. Woman's duty is entirely in the realm of the home, her purpose being to bear children who will strive for the Superman. Zarathustra writes the definition: "Marriage: so call I the will of the twain to create the one that is more than those who created it."<sup>27</sup>

In the theory of Eternal Recurrence, Nietzsche explained another method of selection. He believed that in space there are certain cosmic forces constantly in the process of change. By their many arrangements and merges, they create many kinds of worlds. When the total number of arrangements possible has been made, this process repeats itself, and continues to do so through all eternity. It follows from this that our world will repeat itself sometime in the future to its last detail. It is man's ethical problem to live now in such a way that he will want to live again. This is his eternal life. The weaker peoples of the earth would not be able to stand the thought of living their miserable lives over again. They are incapable of making their lives suitable for eternal recurrence, and therefore escape it by suicide. Only the strong and the brave would remain. All things would be possible in such a select world.<sup>28</sup>

Nietzsche believed that the world of his time had reached a moral inter-regnum. The old morality built on the God-idea was passing away. He sought to find the way to transcend the present moral anarchy, and to build a new system of morality which would aid in the development of man to the higher level of Superman. In his quest for the more perfect morality, Nietzsche examined good and evil. The present morality, which he proposed to discard, drew a sharp line between the two. This is unfortunate because, according to Nietzsche, some evil is useful. It could not be very valuable to man so long as he drew a hard and fast

distinction between the terms good and evil. Nietzsche believed that evil sometimes passes into good. Present moral concepts create a static condition which prevents such a normal change. Some things which are in every sense evil in the present may be necessary for constructive processes of the future. Destruction and the spirit of destruction, which may be evil, prepare the way for new things, and act as a stimulant to man's creative powers. Long hardship develops his better side, his bravery, his daring, and his cunning.<sup>29</sup>

Nietzsche regarded cruelty as true evil carried to the highest degree, and he foresaw the possibility of civilization erasing cruelty altogether. This would doubtless occur when man had reached Nietzsche's ideal culture, and no longer needed evil to stimulate the nobler part of his character. But cruelty in the world of the present is a necessity. Nietzsche observed that it is possible to be cruel to ourselves; pursuit of knowledge is an example of self-inflicted cruelty. Nietzsche stated the justification for cruelty: "To lessen suffering and to escape from suffering-- is that moral? To create suffering--for oneself and others-- in order to enable them to reach the highest life, that of the conqueror-- were my aim."<sup>30</sup> Nietzsche's criticism of pity has been considered by some as a mark of cruelty in his philosophy, but what Nietzsche meant was that pity as a feeling is often worthless. It may even hinder one. He explained: "Not your sympathy, but your bravery hath hitherto saved the victims."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, he did not believe that even useful pity should be wasted on worthless people, thus injecting the idea of selection into pity. It seems cruel to limit sympathy to those who are not degenerate, but this was part of Nietzsche's plan for the future.<sup>32</sup>

Nietzsche, in his characteristic strong style, lashed out at Christianity:

I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great intrinsic depravity, the one great instinct of revenge for which no expedient is sufficiently poisonous, secret, subterranean, mean,--I call it the one immortal blemish of mankind.<sup>33</sup>

At another time he referred to Christianity as a slave religion, preaching to the masses and the downtrodden to revolt against their overlords. It was thus responsible for the transvaluation of true values to those of slave morality.<sup>34</sup> Christian religion upheld the virtues of sacrifice, generosity and gentleness, virtues which had no foundation in nature and would certainly not promote the rise of the Superman, who must triumph over the weak.<sup>35</sup> One writer has said that Nietzsche's attack is not on the whole of Christianity, but rather on its morals, which have become perverted from their original meaning, and are no longer useful. This theory checks with Nietzsche's accusation that Christianity must answer for the transvaluation of values to slave morality standards. His criticism of Christianity would be, therefore, not for purposes of destruction, but for reformation of certain aspects of present day religion. He desired a return to a true Christianity.<sup>36</sup> Two references in Will to Power illustrate this purpose:

The whole life of the Christian is ultimately exactly that life from which Christ preached deliverance....

Christianity is still possible at any moment. It is not bound to any one of the impudent dogmas that have adorned themselves with its name: it needs neither the teaching of the personal God, nor of sin, nor of immortality, nor of redemption, nor of faith; it has absolutely no need whatever of metaphysics, and it needs asceticism and Christian "natural science" still less. Christianity is a method of life, not a system of belief. It tells us how we should behave, not what we should believe.<sup>37</sup>

Nietzsche believed that the original teachings of Christianity glorified this life rather than the beyond; Christ taught of a kingdom of the heart rather than of heaven. The vision of another world lowers the values of this life. Nietzsche placed this life supreme, an ideal



which resulted in his doctrine of Eternal Recurrence.

This true Christianity would probably serve for those people of today who need a pure religion--those striving for the Superman. It might be desirable also for the lower classes of the future, who would need a system of behavior other than that of Superman. Those people who must have faith and the comfort of immortality are, in Nietzsche's mind, not worth consideration. But the Superman is above codes of morality. He will devise his own system and will not need the teachings of even a pure Christianity. Therefore, for Nietzsche there existed two types of Christianity--the present perverted religion that caters to the people who are not capable of comprehending Christ's teachings without the elements of faith and immortality, and the pure Christianity which Nietzsche thinks would reinstate the real doctrines of Christ. This latter form of Christianity is necessarily for a more advanced mind, and it is implied that the people who possess such advanced minds are Nietzsche's ideal for the masses in his new culture.

Above these two types of Christianity, the Superman will turn to his own code of ethics; those he rules will retain the true Christian religion. Nietzsche believed that all morality should be revised to aid the strivings for the new civilization, but his Superman, once achieved, would live above the ordinary morality, the law of the masses. He would create his own morality. In his other regions above other men, he would make new laws for his own conduct. Nietzsche did not elaborate on what this Superman morality would be; his emphasis was more on strivings for the Superman.

In Nietzsche's future society, people would be organized according to rank, since he believed that this is the natural order.<sup>38</sup> Yet all all classes would be necessary to each other. The highest class would give direction to a ruling class, one that would do the actual work of

government for the superclass.<sup>39</sup> Nietzsche called the Supermen "law-givers of the future and the lords of the earth;" they would say: "Beyond Good and Evil,-certainly; but we insist upon the unconditional and strict preservation of hero-morality."<sup>40</sup> Their aloofness would not prevent them from keeping an eye on the needs of the masses. They would provide for the type of morality suited for those who did not become Supermen. It is important to notice the distinction Nietzsche made between the lord and the leader. The leader would be the servant of the flock, in that he would guide and care for it. Law for the whole would be law for him. But the lord would be the end for which the flock would exist. He would be above the herd law. He would be the Superman, using the masses as stepping stones to his greatness.<sup>41</sup>

The Superman endowed with superior qualities would attain world control. These thinkers and men of action would choose themselves not on the basis of wealth and race, but on the principle of masterful intelligence. There are no pure races in Europe now, the Supermen would be the superior persons from all races.<sup>42</sup> As for the supposed superiority of the aristocracy, Nietzsche said that the peasants had better blood.<sup>43</sup> Nietzsche was no nationalist. Even though his thought is said by some writers to have been snatched up by German nationalists, he rarely had a good word for the Germans. He once wrote: "The Germans themselves have no future."<sup>44</sup> He took pride in his Polish ancestry,<sup>45</sup> and renounced his German citizenship in order to become a professor at the University of Basel.<sup>46</sup> He was at no time anti-Semitic. He even proposed the possibility of the Jews becoming masters of Europe because of their capabilities and heritage. This did not mean that they might become Supermen, but rather the rulers in Europe's present culture.<sup>47</sup> Nietzsche transcended national barriers to prophesy a European League of Nations,

which would expand into a global and universal organization.

When Nietzsche spoke of war, he usually meant war for the ideals of this new order. Zarathustra said: "Your enemy shall ye seek; your war shall ye wage, and for the sake of your thoughts." The final world unit, to be achieved even by war if necessary, would be the foundation for the control of the earth by the Superman.<sup>48</sup>

Nietzsche spoke of those who were striving for this new order in Europe:

We homeless ones are too diverse and mixed in race and descent as modern men, and are consequently little tempted to participate in falsified racial self-admiration and lewdness which at present display themselves in Germans, as signs of German sentiment, and which strike one as doubly false and unbecoming in the people with the 'historical sense'.<sup>49</sup>

Zarathustra had a word of comfort for these men:

Ye lonesome ones of today, ye seceding ones, ye shall one day be a people; out of you who have chosen yourselves, shall a chosen people arise:--and out of it the Superman.<sup>50</sup>

Jacques Barzun interprets Nietzsche's writings as a warning to his age of impending disaster. Barzun refers to the present western civilization as decadent, one nearing destruction if its people do not try to reform its structure. He explains certain characteristics of Nietzsche's style and manner in the following sentences:

The problem was on a continental scale and Nietzsche alone, it seemed, was raising his solitary voice in an overpopulated desert. This is one reason why his words are so violent and his metaphors military. He must make his contemporaries understand by using the language of competition and struggle which they already knew. They misunderstood nonetheless by the convenient method of overlooking a good half of what he said. They took the flattery and forgot the warnings, and still today Germans and anti-Germans tug over the body of Nietzschean doctrine, mistaking strength and force, anti-morality and immorality, superman and brute.<sup>51</sup>

If this interpretation were accepted, Nietzsche would be absolved of all charges of influence on National Socialism. The theory that he was misunderstood is worthy of further consideration. It is known that his



form of writing lends itself to misinterpretation because of its symbols and concise phrases. Nietzsche himself said:

.....around every profound spirit there continually grows a mask, owing to the constantly false, that is to say, superficial interpretation of every word he utters, every step he takes, every sign of life he manifests.<sup>52</sup>

Some writers believe that Nietzsche's thought was perverted during his own life time. The interest his doctrine was said to have aroused among youths, militarists, Junkers, and nationalists has already been mentioned.<sup>53</sup> Louis Snyder said: "All turned to him as to a new prophet and proceeded to read into his philosophy a moral justification for German nationalism."<sup>54</sup> Carlton J. H. Hayes believed that writers of the period became disciples of what they read into Nietzsche's thought, translating personal egotism into national egotism.<sup>55</sup> If these assertions are true, Nietzsche might have been an apostle of German nationalism against his own will.

German nationalism of Nietzsche's century evolved from the cultural nationalism advocated early in the century by Herder, to Bismarck's later "blood and iron" policy. Herder, a historian and philosopher who lived most of his life in the last part of the eighteenth century, sought to instill in the Germans a pride in their past and in their language.<sup>56</sup> History for Herder was an irrational, divine, superpersonal whole, which completely engulfed the individual.<sup>57</sup> All periods of civilization were perfect in their own ways, and no one should criticize or long to return to any epoch. Herder was particularly interested in the Middle Ages, and he found nothing but praise for the Germans of this era.<sup>58</sup> He stressed his idea of national individuality, and pointed out the difference among peoples of the world due to climatic conditions, blood mixture, and Volk spirit. He believed that the nation was an organic personal whole greater than the sum of this parts, the Volk. This whole is permeated mystically

with the "national spirit" and the "soul of the Volk". The nation is thereby above the Volk even though it was created by the union of the individuals of the Volk. In pursuing his theory Herder collected Volk poetry and made a study of comparative philology. He believed that a people's language and literature must contain the essence of their feeling and their national individuality.<sup>59</sup> Herder was certain that the truly great nation must be separated from the others in all phases of its life. He frowned upon the universal aspects of the Christian faith and asked if Germany had not bought Christianity at the price of genuine nationalism.

Fichte followed Herder as the next significant figure in the evolution of German nationalism. An early work of this philosopher of the Romantic period was a rebuttal of Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations. Fichte advocated internal economic control by the state, complemented by strict state supervision of foreign trade, two policies leading to the goal of national self sufficiency. Fichte believed that such a commercial state would promote international peace. However, in the process of a state's enclosure into its "national frontiers", all territory would have to be included which was deemed necessary for self-sufficient production. Fichte failed to see the difficulty of bringing together two incompatible ideas, peace and imperialism. He saw only a "different entirely new nation" which would evolve within the borders of this enclosed state free of foreign influence.

Fichte expanded Herder's cultural nationalism by asserting that the superiority of the German language indicated the superiority of the people who spoke it. He also emphasized the importance of education as a device to instill love of the fatherland.<sup>60</sup>

Fichte's most important contribution to nineteenth century German nationalism was, however, his theory of activistic transpersonalism,

whereby the moral consciousness of individuals, once integrated; becomes a totality. This totality is creative and supra-personal. It has an existence and activity of its own independent of the existence and activity of the component individual moral consciousness. Fichte did not intend for the moral ideal totality to be identified with state, but with society. Society has values superior to those of the state, therefore, Germans should develop a national culture which would guarantee German predominance in Europe, rather than seeking European rule through conquests made by the German state. This idea removes Fichte's nationalism from the aggressive category.<sup>61</sup> However, his concept of the moral totality identified with society is a philosophic approach to Herder's Volk union, another statement of the dangerous mathematical fallacy of the German nationalists, namely that the whole is greater than the sum of all its parts. This being the case, the nation exists apart from the sum of individuals, with a being and soul of its own. The will and needs of this supra-individual need not be identical with those of all, or a majority of individuals in the nation. This belief clears the way for the Volk leader who personifies the Volk but does not use their guidance.

At Fichte's death in 1814, his chair in the University of Berlin was taken by the philosopher Hegel, a thinker who was to contribute further to German nationalism. Hegel is known for his glorification of the state. He believed that the state is the prime expression of the Divine as it unfolds in history. In his own time, Hegel claimed that the Divine was found in the Prussian state; history completed itself in nineteenth century Prussia. As such, the Prussian state was absolute. War waged by the Prussian state was necessary and good. States in relation to each other were in "a state of nature," not



subject to the laws of ordinary morality. International anarchy and amorality made survival the test of national righteousness, since presumably the state which most truly embodied the Divine would be the state to survive.<sup>62</sup>

Hegel, like Fichte, believed that the state had its foundations in the Volk. The fundamental thought of the Volk, however, could not be expressed through representative institutions, since such institutions can only express the will of a majority of individuals. It is the monarch, true representative of the Volk, who must control the state. Hegel was thus the spokesman and apologist for the autocracy of nineteenth century Prussia.<sup>63</sup>

Treitschke was the most important nineteenth century representative of the Prussian school of political historians. His purpose in teaching and writing history was to advance the cause of German unification under the leadership of Prussia. He believed that the state is power and he adhered to the philosophy of history which emphasizes the importance of the strong and gifted individual. Liberty for him was much limited by the state. Once a critic of Bismarck, Treitschke became later the chancellor's official apologist for foreign aggression, political expediency, and the idea of a strong state.<sup>64</sup> Treitschke believed that to strengthen its power the state must maintain a well organized army. By fighting for the state, the individual becomes more completely a part of it. Individual ego merges into national ego. Periods of peace are necessary only to prepare for war, the time in which trivial individuality is submerged in the grandeur of the state. The reason for war is unimportant, for war itself is good and to prevent war is to hamper human freedom. In battle all men, and especially Germans, show their finest qualities. Though Treitschke did not write of Volk union, his ideas on

the submergence of the individual into the state are somewhat akin to the former concept. However, his chief emphasis was on the power of the state. It is fitting that he should be called the "voice of the second Empire."<sup>65</sup>

Treitschke's contemporary, Bismarck, found the historian's popularity valuable for creating a climate of thought in Prussia which would accept his Realpolitik, his policy of "blood and iron."

Bismarck was the pragmatist among German nationalists, an avowed political opportunist. Hence his nationalist thought in itself would give little insight into the man's contribution to aggressive nationalism. His one immutable belief was that force should be the instrument of national policy. He unified Germany but did not plan future aggression.<sup>66</sup> However, his Machivellian policies could not be taken out of the German mind. By the agency of fear he had achieved union. This fear became an obsession which prompted the Germans toward later aggression.<sup>67</sup>

From this summary of the political concepts of the significant German nationalists of the nineteenth century it can be concluded that the central theme of their thinking was the glorification of the state or nation through force. Nietzsche's Will to Power is akin to the force exalted by the nationalists. Both views elevate strength and might above the Reason that had prevailed in the eighteenth century. However, Nietzsche did not praise the unit of the nation. He wanted a world state over which his Superman would rule. The German nationalists placed ideas similar to his, force and autocracy, within the narrow borders of the national state. Nietzsche preferred to think always in terms of the whole world. This difference of emphasis forms a contrast between Nietzsche's dream of the future and the practical national present of the German nationalists. Nietzsche's glorification of the future world state,

however, led to international anarchy rather than the unity that he wanted.

It is not necessary to read nationalism into the prose and musical works of Richard Wagner. His thoughts and actions placed him clearly among the ranks of German Nationalists of the last half of the nineteenth century. The man said to have exerted the greatest positive influence on Wagner was Count Gobineau, the French scholar and diplomat.<sup>68</sup> In interpreting the Count's ideas as a justification for theories of German racial superiority, the Master himself was guilty of perverting another's thoughts. Gobineau's Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races, which was first published in 1853, did not attribute racial superiority to a whole nation. The French Count was trying to explain the superiority he believed he and his fellow French aristocrats had over their country's lower classes. He based his argument on the theory that his group was of pure Aryan lineage, while the masses had deteriorated due to racial mixture. Gobineau's ideas attracted more attention in Germany than in France. The whole German nation was believed to be Aryan and possessors of the same fine qualities as the Count assigned to his ancestors. German nationalists, including Wagner, particularly liked the part of Gobineau's work which asserted that European history began with the migration of the Germanic peoples. This migration produced the high civilization which exhibited the superior tendencies of the Aryan. Richard Wagner called the man a mastermind and a great prophet.<sup>69</sup>

Wagner was keenly interested in Gobineau's theory of racial decay through mixture. The musician sought some way to arrest civilization's descent, the "Twilight of the Gods." He observed that the small number of Caucasians made necessary that race's mixture with others, and caused the white man to sink to the level of the race with which he mingled.



More specifically, Wagner was concerned with the fall of the Germans, a decline which began when the nordic tribes mixed with the people of the South during the barbarian invasions. Thereby the Teutons lost their strongest Aryan virtues. Other men may have descended from the ape, but Wagner said of his beloved Teutons: "Like Herakles and Siegfried, they were conscious of divine descent: a lie to them was inconceivable, and a free man meant a truthful man." To check the decay of civilization Wagner proposed that marriages should be no longer for convenience but for the preservation of racial purity. Animals, he pointed out, had through instinctive obedience to the laws of breeding maintained their specie pureness down through the centuries.<sup>70</sup>

Wagner, a vegetarian himself, believed that meat should no longer be a part of man's diet if racial regeneration was to take place. Wagner cited the examples of the long lives of such vegetarians as the Russian peasants and the courage and intelligence of the non-meat eating Japanese, to prove the falsity of the theory that meat is essential in northern climates. To escape the curse of meat eating, Wagner proposed in his later years abandonment of the northern climates and migration to South America.<sup>71</sup> Nietzsche's sister, Elizabeth Förster Nietzsche, married a fervid disciple of Wagner, Dr. Bernhard Förster, who founded a little colony called Nueva Germania in Paraguay, in accordance with the suggestions of the Master.<sup>72</sup>

Wagner's most noteworthy contribution to German nationalism was his union of the theories of racialism and communism, a combination which was to "sell" nationalism to the German working class.<sup>73</sup> Wagner's concept of communism was as nebulous as his other ideas about the world of reality. In the 1848 Revolution he championed the worker's cause. In the pamphlet which he wrote for that purpose, Revolution, his

revolutionary goddess said: "I will destroy the order of things that turns millions to slaves of a few and these few to slaves of their own night, own riches."<sup>74</sup> Wagner later wrote in favor of universal suffrage and the breaking of class distinctions: "The poorer, the needier he is, the more natural is his claim to share in framing the laws that henceforth are to shield him against poverty and neediness."<sup>75</sup> In 1879 Wagner attacked the Reichstag which had been elected by universal suffrage, accusing that body of neglecting the German workers and forcing them to emigrate. The Jewish members of the government were responsible, according to Wagner, for this disregard of the proletariat's needs.<sup>76</sup> Wagner, so it seemed, had stumbled on the modern equivalent of bread and circuses.<sup>77</sup>

The fact that Richard Wagner lived his life in a theatrical atmosphere may explain the fantastic aspect of some of his ideas. Wagner's stepfather, an actor named Ludwig Geyer, caused affairs of the stage to be discussed often in the composer's household. Wagner began writing serious music at seventeen. While in his early twenties, he went to Paris to attempt to get his opera, Rienzi, performed there.<sup>78</sup> There are various opinions on the importance of the Parisian episode on Wagner's life. Nietzsche held the extreme view that all Wagner's music is more French than German because of this interlude in the Composer's life.<sup>79</sup> In Paris Wagner did write the first of his operas based on legend, The Flying Dutchman. This opera was first produced several years later in Dresden, where Wagner had secured a position as one of the court musicians. Due to his participation in the 1848 Revolution, he was forced to seek exile first in Weimar with Franz Liszt, a sympathizer and admirer, and later in Switzerland. During this period he began work on The Nibelung Ring, his famous series of music dramas based on Teuton

legend. Nearly twenty years later Ludwig of Bavaria became Wagner's patron. After some misunderstandings, Wagner was able finally to erect with the help of Cosima Wagner, his wife and the daughter of Liszt, the Bayreuth Festival Theatre, which was to become the music center of Germany.<sup>80</sup>

German nationalists of the period believed that Wagner's music filled the need for a national German music. His Nibelung Ring was known as the "National Music Drama." Wagner himself saw the powerful factor of the theatre in developing German nationalism. He especially desired a regeneration of the German spirit. He hoped that his marches and melodies would reflect the depth of the German soul.<sup>81</sup> The characters in his operas exhibited the finest of the German-Nordic characteristics, -mildness, honest wrath, fidelity, good nature, love, valor, stubborn toughness, and stern defiance. These German Folk traits are found in the pagan setting of the Ring series.<sup>82</sup> Carlton J. H. Hayes said of these Wagnerian operas: "In 1876 he crowned German's new imperial nationalism with his Ring Der Nibelungen, a new sort of aesthetic nationalism resoundingly resurrecting the demigods of pre-Christian Teutonic Valhalla."<sup>83</sup>

A younger Wagner was an active participant in the Revolution of 1848. It was pointed out above that the German revolutionists were nationalistic in contrast to the liberal rebels in other parts of Europe.<sup>84</sup> Wagner became a revolutionist partly because of his financial predicament, which could only be remedied by the emergence of a new order, and partly because he believed his thwarted plans for a German national theatre could be achieved by overturning the political system which refused to aid his plan.<sup>85</sup> He felt sorry for the common people, and hoped that their conditions could be bettered by the overthrow of the existing government. He hoped that the Volk would be free to show their natural virtues. Wagner's



actual revolutionary activities were restricted to the Dresden Uprising in May, 1849. In later years he and his biographers of the Wahnfried school tried to create the impression that the revolt itself was small, and Wagner's part in it even smaller. Evidence has been unearthed however, which proves that he was among its leaders.<sup>86</sup>

During the period immediately preceding the Dresden revolt, Wagner wrote a number of articles which reflected his views on leadership and the Volk, that mystic idea of the organic oneness of the German people conceived by the German Romantics of the early nineteenth century. The musician wrote some tracts on the need for revolution, but the former concepts are more significant. All of the articles appeared in the Dresden Volksblätter, the journal of the revolutionaries. In early 1849 he wrote a book review for this periodical in which he praised the Volk as the fountain of all that is worthy in the world. He added that he expected the theatre to play its true part in culture, that is, to invigorate and ennoble the manners and tastes of the people. He had great confidence in the Volk.<sup>87</sup> Earlier he had written an article entitled "What Relations do Republican Endeavors Bear to the Kingship?" In it he tied Volk to the beginnings of his leadership concept. In the article he advised the king of Saxony to give up his throne in order that he might get it back from the people. By this act the Saxon ruler would become the foremost member of the Volk because he had given up his hereditary royal right to the throne.<sup>88</sup>

Peter Vierick has written that this theory of the tie between the king and the Volk was the first step in Wagner's development of the leader of Führer concept. Viereck said that Wagner meant to make the king the mouthpiece of the Volk, that is to represent the interest of the people as a unit. Wagner believed that constitutions separated the Volk from its

mouthpiece, since the King represents the Volk in its organic whole. Viereck finds a paradox in this because if Wagner did not believe in constitutions and other similar governmental institutions of the people, then it follows that for him, Democracy is not the rule of the people. The real rule of the people is through the leaders, who is the expression of the people as a whole. Viereck found a second stage of Wagner's leadership idea in an essay written in 1864 and meant for King Ludwig of Bavaria. The king is the expression of the mystic Wahn which is created by the supernatural race spirit. Wagner said in this essay that the king may override the party interests for the benefit of the whole, the Volk. The third stage of the concept is stated in an essay "Herodom", written by Wagner in 1881. The leader is no longer called a king. He is the "divine hero of the future." Aside from these three stages in the leader idea, Wagner wrote of the promise of the medieval German emperor Barbarossa to return in German's darkest hour to save his people. Wagner believed in the reincarnation of Barbarossa and Siegfried, the legendary Nordic hero, at this time of greatest distress. It may be that Viereck places too much emphasis on Wagner's leader idea. The writer's theory is based on only a few of the musician's speeches and articles. Perhaps the importance of the Führer concept in the future justifies this stress.<sup>89</sup>

The first written evidence of Wagner's violent and much discussed anti-Semitism was in "Judaism in Music", an article published September 1850 in the *Neue Zeitschrift*, a popular music magazine. The article raised such a storm in Germany that the editor of the journal, Brendel, was asked to resign his position as professor of music history at the Leipzig Conservatory.<sup>90</sup> The fact that the article caused such an unfavorable reaction indicates that Germany was not yet riddled with the

disease of anti-Semitism. Wagner did not discuss Jews in the fields of religion and politics in his article, but only Jews in the realm of art and music. The fury with which he attacked this subject, however, left little doubt as to his feelings toward the Jew in all phases of society. He wrote:

According to the present constitution of the world, the Jew in truth is already more than emancipated: he rules, and will rule, so long as money remains the power before which all our doings and dealings lose their force.

Wagner asserted that the appearance of the Jew which is "disagreeably foreign" makes him unsuitable for acting, "the art of representment." He added: "neither can we hold him capable of any sort of artistic utterance of his essence." Because the Jew is not truly a European, he cannot learn the European languages and is unable to create in alien tongue. He said of the Jewish speech:

In particular does the purely physical aspect of the Jewish mode of speech repel us. Throughout an intercourse of two millinnia with European nations Culture has not succeeded in breaking the remarkable stubbornness of the Jewish naturel as regards the peculiarities of Semitic pronunciation.

Wagner continued to reason along this line by observing that "Song" is just "Talk" aroused to highest passion: "Music is the speech of Passion." Therefore he concluded that the Jewish song repels us in its foreign, unpleasant sound. He pointed out that Jews are not capable of participating in the plastic arts. Wagner said that he could not think of a Jewish architect, sculptor, or painter of his time.<sup>91</sup>

Wagner signed his article K. Freigedank (Free Thinker). Due to the number of clues given in his style and thought, it is doubtful that many people were fooled by this disguise for long.<sup>92</sup> William A. Ellis said of the reaction to the article: "Judaism in Music" created a great stir, both in its earlier and its later publication (in 1869) gaining



Wagner more and bitterer foes than anything else that came from his pen." In the replies that appeared soon after the article's publication, the general sentiment was that Richard Wagner's remarks were either those of an idiot or a madman.<sup>93</sup>

In considering circumstances that may have caused Wagner to be anti-Semitic, the question arises of who was his father. Wagner believed that his father was actually Ludwig Geyer, the actor,<sup>94</sup> who was thought by some to be Jewish. Nietzsche, who was given access at one time to some of Wagner's most personal papers, wrote:

His father was a stage-player named Geyer. A Geyer is almost an Adler. (Geyer and Adler are both names of Jewish families.) What has hitherto been put in circulation as the "Life of Wagner" is fable convenue, if not worse. I confess my distrust of every point which rests solely on the testimony of Wagner himself.<sup>95</sup>

The rumor of Wagner's Jewish origin spread quickly through European music circles. His enemies spread the idea through caricatures and newspaper articles.<sup>96</sup> Wagner's belief that he was of possible Jewish origin might explain to some degree his violent anti-Semitism as a double compensation for something he viewed with shame.

Cosima Wagner, the composer's second wife, was also known to be a rabid anti-semite. For her, race explained almost everything. Jews and Catholics, she said, were responsible for most of Europe's troubles and for most of the opposition to Wagner. A Jew could only be redeemed by devoting himself to Bayreuth. It is impossible to determine if she influenced Wagner's anti-Semitism. It may be that the master influenced her. Ernest Newman, the famous biographer of Wagner, said of her:

Like him, she solved, in her own estimation and to her own satisfaction, no end of problems by tracing them back to "the Jews," an admirably simple procedure that easily passed current for wisdom in Germany, with the lunatic doctrines of "race" that were current there even at that time, but led to the most ludicrous results when applied to the affairs of other countries.<sup>97</sup>

In considering a possible influence of Wagner's political ideas on the Germany of this time, Louis Snyder asserts:

German public opinion, a strange but vastly important intangible, was affected strongly by the mind of a national hero such as Wagner. In him was epitomized Germany's greatness. When he twisted the meaning of his art into a justification of German nationalism, public opinion was inclined to agree with him.<sup>98</sup>

Nietzsche and Wagner were at one time the best of friends. This could mean that the two men's thoughts were fundamentally alike.

However, judging from circumstances before and after their break, Nietzsche seemed to have had a false impression of Wagner's purpose for his music during the period of their friendship, 1869 to 1876. He believed that Wagner's music would prepare the world emotionally for the culture to be. The Birth of Tragedy, which was written while Nietzsche was under the influence of Wagner and dedicated to the Master of Bayreuth, attempted to show that the tragic view and the tragic art of the Greeks was needed for another great culture today. Wagner, Nietzsche was convinced pointed the way.<sup>99</sup> The thinker believed that there was a cosmopolitanism in Wagner similar to his own. He wrote: "His thoughts, like those of every good and great German, are more than German, and the language of his art does not appeal to particular races but to mankind in general."<sup>100</sup>

Nietzsche regarded Bayreuth, which was to be the scene of the Wagner Festival in 1876, as the center of the new culture that was to go out to all peoples. He wrote the pamphlet, "Richard Wagner in Bayreuth", to serve the general cause of the new culture. It was published just before the Bayreuth opening in 1876.<sup>101</sup> In regard to his idealism of Bayreuth he said:

For us, Bayreuth is the consecration of the dawn of the combat. No greater injustice could be done to us than to suppose that we are concerned with art alone, as though it were merely a means of healing or stupefying us, which we make use of in order to rid our

consciousness of all the misery that still remains in our midst. In the image of this tragic art work at Bayreuth, we see, rather, the struggle of individuals against everything which seems to oppose them with invincible necessity, with power, law, tradition, conduct, and the whole order of things established. Individuals cannot choose a better life than that of holding themselves ready to sacrifice themselves and to die in their fight for love and justice.<sup>102</sup>

When Nietzsche arrived at Bayreuth for the Wagner Festival in the summer of 1876, his idealism was shattered. He was shocked to find people there who came only because they could afford the nine hundred mark admission fee. He failed to understand the character of the typical first night crowd. There were no people at Wahnfried, Wagner's Bayreuth home, discussing the Greek origin of Tragedy or the new German culture.<sup>103</sup> Nietzsche saw his friend in a new garb--that of stage director. Wagner was too busy to talk much with his old friend,<sup>104</sup> and this neglect gave Nietzsche a feeling of insignificance which hurt his pride.<sup>105</sup> Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche, his sister, wrote later that this disillusionment caused her brother to flee to a resort in the Bohemian Forest. He returned for part of the presentation of the Wagnerian operas "because he wished to confirm his impressions and convince himself that his judgment was a final one."<sup>106</sup> Ernest Newman in his Life of Richard Wagner said that Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche has given a false story of Nietzsche's activities during the summer of 1876. In her biography of her brother she had, according to Newman's accusation, left out some passages in her quotations of his letters and misdated them in such a way as to mislead readers as to the true story of what happened at Bayreuth. He gave her reason for this falsification as follows:

Her purpose from the beginning had been to mislead the public in Nietzsche's favour; to conceal from it the simple facts that he had been a pitifully distempered man during the whole of his short stay in Bayreuth, and that when he had fled from the place he had heard no more of the Ring than (a) a noncostume rehearsal of the



Götterdämmerung, one act at a time, (b) Presumably the Rheingold, and (c) a rehearsal of the Valkyrie at which his had been such a torture to him that he had not dared to look at the stage; and to establish the legend that he had given the Ring and Wagner a fair trial and found them both wanting in the high qualities he demanded from music and the drama.

Newman believed that Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche tried to establish a legend about the Bayreuth episode through her biography and her later writings on Wagner to cover up the fact that Nietzsche had not given Wagner's music a fair chance at Bayreuth.<sup>107</sup> Newman thought that the real reason for the break between Nietzsche and Wagner was that their two personalities no longer fitted together. He wrote:

So long as each seemed to the other to be just a factor in his own egoistic development their mutual attraction was stronger than their repulsion. But from the moment that this always unstable equilibrium became still more unstable by reason of Nietzsche's gradual realization of what he was in himself, and his own illimitable self-esteem, his sense of his mission, his lust for power, his inability to suffer contradiction, clashed with the similar complex of forces in Wagner, a breach between the two men was inevitable.

Newman added the idea that Nietzsche was incapable of understanding the whole of Wagner's music. According to Wagner's biographer, Nietzsche had been thrilled by the passion of the Master's music in his youth. He could not understand "music of any kind that showed any complexity of thinking or intricacy of organization." In pursuing this idea further, Newman said:

For a brief period the tremendous emotional impact of Tristan, the Meistersinger, and the Ring had set a fire raging in the youthful Nietzsche. But his musical arteries were unable to stand for long so high a blood pressure; and when the reaction came--the world was treated to the edifying spectacle of the pint-pot capacity railing peevishly at the impermissible magnitude of quarts--for that is the last resort, is all that Nietzsche's objurgations of the musician Wagner amount to today.<sup>108</sup>

H. L. Mencken, a biographer of Nietzsche, adopted a different attitude on the subject of the break. According to his version of the parting, Nietzsche finally realized Wagner's "mountebankish" character

and saw fit to end relations with the musician. Furthermore, Mencken believed that Nietzsche had grown intellectually too much to continue as a satellite. He wrote of Wagner:

He had seduced the young professor from the straight and narrow path, but he was quite unable to follow the fugitive into the high mountain ways that invited him...He may remain a genius but he is a genius who is also a bit of a mountebank--a genius who thinks of his audience as well as of his work, and is not forgetful of boxoffice statements. Actors make bad philosophers--and a man who writes operas, however gorgeous, becomes thereby partly an actor.<sup>109</sup>

Even though Mencken's treatment of Wagner's genius is perhaps unjustly harsh, his theory that Nietzsche had outgrown Wagner seems valid. In attempting to make a fair appraisal of the reasons for the break, it is necessary to mention that Nietzsche was disillusioned with Wagner's purpose for his art. He found that Wagner had more German patriotism than interest in art as a stepping stone to a future culture. William Salter wrote:

Wagner had gone, the early illusion about him had vanished; but the transcendent vision of superhuman excellence which Nietzsche had momentarily identified with that great figure survived.

The final parting of Nietzsche and Wagner occurred after the two met at Sorrento in the autumn of 1877. Wagner told his former friend of his work on Parisfal and tried to explain his inclination toward the Christian dogma.<sup>110</sup> Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche said of this last meeting of the two men:

My brother had the greatest possible respect for sincere, honest Christianity, but he considered it quite impossible that Wagner, the avowed atheist, should suddenly have become a naive and pious believer. He could only regard Wagner's alleged, sudden change of heart, as having been prompted by desire to stand with the Christian rulers of Germany and thus further the material success of the Bayreuth undertaking.<sup>111</sup>

Nietzsche noticed that Parsifal was not only Christian but Buddhist in its glorification of celibacy. He believed that this implied a

hatred of life, and life was Nietzsche's idea.<sup>112</sup> On this subject he wrote:

For Parsifal is a work of cunning, of revengefulness, of secret poison-brewing, hostile to the pre-requisites of life; a bad work. The preaching of chastity is an incitement to anti-naturalness: I despise everyone who does not regard Parsifal as an outrage on morals.<sup>113</sup>

Wagner is said to have thought of himself as a true Christian, believing that other Christians were out of step.<sup>114</sup> William Ellis, translator of Wagner's prose writings, was convinced that Wagner was a Christian because he found many references to his Christianity in his prose. He rejected Nietzsche's view that Wagner had suddenly turned Christian.<sup>115</sup> On the other hand, perhaps Wagner's assertions of Christianity were for the benefit of his public, as Nietzsche's sister had suggested they were.<sup>116</sup> Peter Viereck said: "Wagner's Nibelungen operas have made him the most influential modern popularizer of nordic paganism." It is difficult to accept Ellis's belief in Wagner's constant Christianity in view of the pagan theme of the Master's operas. The German-Nordic traits shown in the operatic characters such as wrath, sensual love, aggressive valor, toughness, and defiance are not primarily Christian characteristics. Even Parsifal had pagan ritual in its supposedly Christian elements. The basic Wagnerian paganism cannot be reconciled with Christian beliefs.

If Nietzsche and Wagner parted because the difference of their ideas made their friendship impossible, their combined thought cannot be analyzed for its possible influence on National Socialism. Nietzsche the cosmopolitan, and Wagner, the nationalist, must be considered separately if a fair conclusion is to be reached.

Nietzsche was the national hero of the Nazis. This may serve as a suitable indictment for some but it is important to look beyond this



for positive proof of his influence on Nazism. It is known that the Nazi official philosopher, Rosenberg, considered Nietzsche one of Nazism's four intellectual grandparents. Goebbels had learned to worship Nietzsche through his Jewish professor, Gundolf. Hitler made a personal pilgrimage to the Nietzsche shrine in Weimar, 117 and had himself photographed beside a bust of Nietzsche. The Führer even put the Nietzsche manuscripts under his guardianship and chose excerpts from them for his speeches. Nietzsche's own family admitted ties between the thinker and Hitler. Nietzsche's sister, a few months before her death, is said to have thanked Hitler for the honor he had given her brother, and told Hitler that he was the incarnation of the Superman prophesied by Zarathustra. Nietzsche's cousin, Richard Oehler, wrote that Nietzsche's thoughts were Hitler in action, and that Nietzsche was the foremost pioneer of Nazism.<sup>118</sup> Ernest Newman reflected bitterly that the world might have been happier under a Wagnerian philosophy of world redeeming love than under Nietzsche's ideal of power.<sup>119</sup> To substantiate his claim, he referred to the words of the Nazi writer who said:

When today we see the German youth marching under the sign of the swastika, our minds go back to Nietzsche's Thoughts Out of Season, in which this youth was invoked for the first time. Our highest hopes today is that the State shall now stand open to it. And when we call out to this youth 'Heil Hitler!' we greet at the same time with the same cry, Friedrich Nietzsche.<sup>120</sup>

In looking beneath the surface of Nietzsche, the Nazi Hero, the part of National Socialist creed, which centers around, nation and race must first be considered. Hitler said in Mein Kampf that the formation of higher cultures had depended on the existence of inferior peoples.<sup>121</sup> This had the tone of the Nietzschean theory that the masses are to be stepping stones for the development of the higher man.<sup>122</sup> Hitler wrote that life's everyday struggle was for "the promotion of the species

health and force of resistance and thus a cause for its development toward a higher level."<sup>123</sup> Nietzsche said that he did not believe that a struggle for existence existed today but he did believe that danger brought out his Superman's highest virtues.<sup>124</sup> Hitler once told Hermann Rauschning in a private interview that he believed the nation concept would in time become useless. He talked of the day to come when "we shall make a pact with these new men in England, France, and America." These will be the superior men of those countries who accept the Nazi plan of the new world order.<sup>125</sup> Nietzsche spoke of the Superman who would come from the highest individuals in all races. His Superman was to gain world control.<sup>126</sup> Up to this point there seems to be a definite similarity between the two plans.

But Hitler wanted to replace the nation concept with the race concept.<sup>127</sup> It is true that he mentioned the superior men of other countries, but he was careful to choose those men who possessed Nordic strains. The idea of race, therefore, is a difference in the two theories of world control. Hitler wrote of the obligation to "promote the victory of better and stronger and to demand the submission of the worse and the weaker."<sup>128</sup> This idea resembles Nietzsche's selection to reach the Superman.<sup>129</sup> However, Hitler meant the obligation to purify the race and he summed up his views on superior men and races in the following manner:

We all sense that in the distant future problems could approach man for the conquest of which only a higher race, as the master nation, based upon the means and the possibilities of an entire globe, will be called upon.

Hitler regarded nationalism as almost a religion. In Mein Kampf he said: "It must be a greater honor to be a citizen of this Reich as a street cleaner, than to be a king in a foreign state."<sup>130</sup> Nietzsche

took pride in his cosmopolitanism. In a letter to a friend he wrote:

In the Europe of today, I feel kinship only with the most cultivated French and Russian people, but not at all with the so called distinguished elite among my own countrymen, who judge everything from the principle 'Germany above everything.'<sup>131</sup>

Hitler said of the Germans: His entire education and development has to be directed at giving him the conviction of being absolutely superior to the others.<sup>132</sup> Nietzsche rarely had a good word for the Germans and certainly did not adhere to their anti-Semitic ideas.<sup>133</sup> He wrote in a letter to the anti-Semite, Theodor Fritsch:

Believe me, this odious mania on the part of puerile amateurs who want, at all cost, to discuss the Value of men and of races, this acceptance of "authorities" whom every thoughtful mind rejects with cold contempt (for example, E. Duhring, Richard Wagner, Ebrard, Wahrmond, P. de Lagarde)... it would be difficult to say whom among the lot is the least qualified, the most unfit to judge questions of morality and history, these everlasting and absurd falsifications, these dogmatic interpretations of vague expressions ('Germanic', 'Semitic', 'Aryan', 'Christian', 'German') all this might make me seriously angry in the long run and lead me to abandon that kindly irony with which, until now, I have regarded the bigoted fancies and gross Pharisaism of the present-day Germans.<sup>134</sup>

The Nazis attempted to cover up the fact that Nietzsche was not an anti-Semite. Late in 1935, a magazine, Judische Rundschau was confiscated for having mentioned the fact in a discreet manner.<sup>135</sup>

Nietzsche's belief that Christianity should be purified of those dogmas which distort Christ's teachings has been discussed.<sup>136</sup> Nietzsche hated ritual; Christ himself led a simple life and must have been indifferent to such form. Yet this is the very part of Christianity that the Nazis have retained. Goebbels said at a Christmas celebration in 1935: "Christmas was a Christian feast, but we have made it into a National-Socialist feast."<sup>137</sup> The Nazis added more ritual of their own--"the 'German' marriage under an oak, incantations to the sun, the feast of the seasons, the ritual of the initiation, a



new baptism, and a new liturgy for funerals." Leaflets from Nietzsche are said to have been read at some of these ceremonies.<sup>138</sup> One of the chief faults Hitler found with the Catholic Church was that it was not German enough.<sup>139</sup> In contrast, the church's collaboration with the national state was frowned upon by Nietzsche. He said:

This is the humorous side of the question--tragic humour: Paul set up on a large scale precisely what Jesus had overthrown by His life. At last when the Church edifice was complete, it even sanctioned the existence of the state.<sup>140</sup>

If the Nazis seek to find an intellectual justification for their brand of anti-Christianity, they should not look to Nietzsche for it.

Thomas Mann believed that all of Nietzsche's thought had been perverted by the Nazis. He wrote:

Fascism as a trick to capture the masses, as the ultimate vulgarity and the most miserably anti-cultural loggerheadedness that ever made history, is foreign to the very depths of that man's spirit for whom everything centers around the query: 'what is noble?'; fascism lies completely beyond his power of imagination, and that the German middle-class should have confused the Nazi assault with Nietzsche's dreams of barbarism to renew civilization, was the clumsiest of all misunderstandings.<sup>141</sup>

It does seem that certain of Nietzsche's ideas were perverted by the Nazis, but there are also some basic similarities between Nietzsche and Hitler. Nietzsche's Supermen were to constitute a superior class of a limited number. Hitler and his elite circle could have been the incarnation of Superman, as Nietzsche's sister told Hitler. They, like the thinker's master-men, gave orders to be carried out by those below them. They held themselves above mass morality and made their own rules. Though their lordship was only over a nation, the Nazis hoped one day to rule the world. Hitler believed the whole German race were Supermen and that all of them would in the future give orders to the other peoples of the earth. This is perhaps too great an extension of Nietzsche's

Superman idea, since he never adhered to the belief that any one race could be master-men. But Hitler and his closest advisors did resemble Nietzsche's vision of Supermen.

The select group was also in a sense similar to the Nietzschean men who were to strive to be superior humans. Certainly these top Nazis used physical cruelty in the "ends-justifies-the-means" sense advocated by Nietzsche. Their concept of the uselessness of pity and of cruelty toward malformed people also had the tone of the nineteenth century thinker's ideas of steps toward the higher culture. The men who strive for Superman were to exist in a world where nationalism still survived. The Superman, Nietzsche believed, was to come when all this had passed away and a world state had been formed.

The problem remains to prove or disprove Wagner's influence on National Socialism. Wagner was given a better place in the hierarchy of Nazism. He was the only predecessor whom Hitler recognized.<sup>142</sup> The young Hitler saw his first opera, Lohengrin, at the age of twelve. He said of the experience:

I was captivated at once. My youthful enthusiasm for the master of Bayreuth knew no bounds. Again and again I was drawn to his works and today I consider it particularly fortunate that the modesty of that provincial performance reserved for me the opportunity of seeing increasingly better production.<sup>143</sup>

He told Herman Rauschning in a conversation that it was not only Wagner's music which interested him, but "the whole revolutionary doctrine of civilization, down to the details that may seem trifling and immaterial." Rauschning wrote further of this talk:

He, Hitler, had come early to Wagner, by chance or by the disposition of providence. He had discovered with almost hysterical excitement that everything written by that great man that he read was in agreement with his own innermost, subconscious, dormant conviction.<sup>144</sup>

Wagner had developed a gloomy idea of the twilight of the gods as symbolism for the decline of the human race. The strong race has become degenerate by mixing with the weaker ones. The gods are blameless for the twilight, but it is possible for them to halt the downward movement of the world temporarily.<sup>145</sup> Hitler saw this problem of racial decay in Parsifal. He looked beyond the "Christian embroidery" to the knights who guarded the secret of life, pure blood, and the king whose incurable sickness was corrupted blood. He said that everyone suffered from the illness of mixed corrupt blood. A struggle is necessary to regain any degree of blood purity.<sup>146</sup> He wrote in Mein Kampf:

Alone the loss of the purity of the blood destroys the inner happiness forever; it eternally lowers man, and never again can its consequences be removed from body and mind.

The sin against the blood and the degradation of the race are the hereditary sins of this world and the end of a mankind surrendering to them.

Hitler and Wagner were both rabid anti-Semites. It would be difficult to prove if Hitler was influenced by Wagner to any degree in this respect. Hitler said that he began to hate Jews when he went to Vienna as a young man and this was long before he knew Wagner's political teachings. However, he discussed Jews in Mein Kampf in a manner often similar to that of Wagner. He wrote of the Jew:

Since of Germany he possess really nothing but the ability to speak its language badly in the most terrible manner, since for the rest, however, he never blended with it, therefore, his whole Germany rests only on the language.

Hitler accused the Jews of lacking creative ability. He said that though they often chose to act on the stage, they could only imitate not really create.<sup>147</sup> Both these theories were expressed by Wagner in "Judaism in Music."



Wagner's concept of a leader who would come again as the reincarnation of Siegfried and Barbarossa most certainly give justification to Hitler's rise to power. Wagner's close identification of the leader with his people "the Volk" is reminiscent of Hitler's alleged relationship to the German masses.<sup>148</sup> This similarity of ideas and circumstances was probably not due to direct Wagnerian influence on Hitler; perhaps the comparison itself was used as an excuse by Hitler for his ruthless manner of assuming power over the German state.

Hitler is said to have identified himself with certain characters of Wagner's opera. In the Nazi "House of German Art" in Munich is a painting of Hitler dressed in shining white armor. This signifies that he saw himself as the knight who has effected a last minute rescue of Germany, as Lohengrin rescued Elsa. He believed that he went into World War II as Siegfried marched forth to slay the dragon.<sup>149</sup> Referring to the first meeting of the Nazi party, Hitler said in Mein Kampf:

"A fire had been lighted, and out of its flames there was bound to come some day the sword which was to regain the freedom of the Germanic Siegfried and the life of German nation."<sup>150</sup> Hitler's favorite opera, despite his love of Siegfried, was the Meistersinger, and he sometimes pictured himself as Hans Sachs. It may be significant that Nuremberg, the home of Hans Sachs, became the official location of the annual Nazi party congresses.

Peter Viereck has pointed out that the Wagner influence had permeated all of Germany and put the people in readiness to symbolize the rise of Hitler as the coming of Siegfried. Viereck said:

A man of action, without even a full high-school education, Hitler could not be particularly well read. If, none the less, he knew his Wagner so thoroughly, these same Wagnerian influences must have been similarly moulding millions of other ordinary Germans, no matter how indirectly.

Opera audiences during the period of the German Republic cheered wildly when they saw the symbolic scene of Siegfried forging his sword. The German people gave the German western line of defense the title, "Siegfried Line," even though the official government name for the forts was the lines line. The Nazi interpretation of the German defeat in 1918, as a stab in the back by Jews and Democrats at home, was swallowed by the German people because they were familiar with the sequence in The Twilight of the Gods in which the blond Siegfried was stabbed in the back by the dark Hagen. Robert Ley, "Führer of the Labor Front," in 1940 made a speech to the German workers with the purpose of converting them to the war. He was able to use the symbolism of the German Siegfried's fight against the English dragon, who guarded the Nibelungen board or raw materials and colonies.<sup>151</sup> Hence Wagner's influence, through his operas, served as a means used by Nazis in enlisting the support of the German people.

This analysis seems to indicate that the influence exerted by Nietzsche on National Socialism was partially perverted and partially direct. Wagner's influence was more positive however, both in his direct influence on Hitler's thought, and in the indirect influence which his operas exerted upon the German people.

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18. Mann, op. cit., 8.
19. Salter, op. cit., 15.
20. Ibid., 35-36, 93-94, 101-102, 149-150, 398.
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28. Salter, op. cit., 164-179, 344.
29. Ibid., 119, 229, 236-239.
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